

# Junior Paleontologists

## Exhibit Hall Activity

Grades 3-8

## Skills Practiced

- Observing
- Predicting
- Recording data
- Measuring

## Concepts Explored

- Dinosaur behavior

## Sample Objective

Students will be able to make predictions about dinosaur behavior based on observations.

## Background

Paleontologists are scientists who study fossils, which are the remnants of organisms that lived in prehistoric times. Examples of fossils include leaf imprints, dinosaur bones, and tracks and trackways. Using fossil clues, paleontologists can learn what life was like millions of years ago. Scientists can use fossil plants to hypothesize about climate (i.e. hot, rainy, cold), habitat type (i.e. swamp, desert, rainforest), and what plant-eating organisms like dinosaurs and insects ate. By examining fossil bones, paleontologists usually can determine the identity of the animal, what it looked like, how it made its living (i.e. as a scavenger, a predator, or a plant-eater), whether it had received any injuries during its life, and, if it had been injured, whether the animal recovered from the injuries or died soon after receiving them. Scientists can use tracks and trackways to identify animals and to answer questions about the animal's life such as whether it lived alone or in a group, or whether it migrated or stayed in one place year-round.

## Materials

- Junior Paleontologist Data Sheets
- pencils
- clipboards
- cloth measuring tapes

## Teacher Preparation

1. Decide into how many groups you will divide your students for this activity and make one copy per group of the Junior Paleontologist Data Sheet.
2. Collect remaining materials listed above in the amounts needed to provide each group with one of each.
3. Many of the questions on the data sheet are subjective and ask the students to use their imaginations—these questions do not have right or wrong answers. Information found in the text panels accompanying displays can be used to answer the objective questions included on the data sheet.

## Activity

Before your trip to the Museum, discuss paleontology with your students. What kinds of things can a paleontologist discover by studying fossilized objects such as bones, plants, insects, and tracks?

At the Museum, divide your students into groups and hand out copies of the data sheet. When you enter the Terror of the South exhibit, give your students time to explore the area and answer the questions on the data sheet.

## Extensions

Show the Museum's Curiosity Class Dinosaur Detectives video (appropriate for grades 3-8). The video was produced for the Department of Public Instruction Starnet Satellite system. For more information visit our Web site at [http://www.naturalsciences.org/education/resources\\_students.html](http://www.naturalsciences.org/education/resources_students.html)